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Assignment 1  
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Audience : Job-seeking students

Help Wanted

“Hey. What’s up?” This isn’t so much of a question as it is a statement saying, “Hey, I work at Hollister.” Hollister Co. has a reputation for its stylish clothes, beach-themed store, and sexy models. But when you work behind the counter, you see a whole new side of things. Hollister may sell upscale retail, but its respect for its employees could be found at the bottom of a bargain bin in a thrift store.

When I received the phone call saying that I had gotten the job at Hollister at Nittany, to say that I was excited would have been an understatement. I rushed in as soon as I could, ready to work. I still had some questions about scheduling, the pay rate, and how to call off work. I realized fairly quickly that these were questions I should have asked sooner than later.

The first week I worked at Hollister, I was scheduled to work on Wednesday and Thursday. One of those days was a “Call-in”. A call-in is when an employee is supposed to call the store an hour before the given start time and see if they are still needed for that day. Sometimes you work, sometimes you don’t, but either way, you have to plan your whole day around the possibility that you might be working. Little did I know, it had nothing to do with the work load or whether they actually needed someone to help. In fact, it had everything to do with how many people called off work throughout the week or just didn’t show up. I called in on that first Thursday to find that not only did they need me that night, but that suddenly I popped up on Friday’s schedule, too. Hollister, I found, is infamous for last minute schedule changes, which are usually unannounced. I know a concrete schedule is hard to ask for in a part-time position, but the least they could have done was give me a heads up! This sudden schedule change can sometimes be due to the fact that the store didn’t have enough recorded hours, and just needed bodies to clock in and out to fill the quota. To be more clear, here’s an example. Let’s say that the store has 5 people on the schedule for a given shift, and of those 5 people, two didn’t show up. That means there were 3 people doing the work of 5. The next shift, there are employees scheduled for call-ins. So, all 5 people regularly scheduled for the shift show up along with two extra people who are only there to fill the hours that were missed by the two employees from the previous shift. Get the picture? So, when this happens, those two extra people from the call-ins are usually stuck with nothing to do. Sorry, but I’m not keen on standing around for four hours doing nothing when I could better spend my time writing papers or studying.

Two weeks into my new job, I found out that I was only getting paid minimum wage. I was under the impression that since Hollister is a more expensive clothing company, that the employees were getting better wages. Well, you know what they say when you assume. Getting 7.25 an hour after giving up my job back home that paid 10.50 an hour, doesn’t seem right, does it? So I tried to figure out other benefits. Everyone clocks in with a card. This card is not only the key to getting hours but also to getting discounts. So I went shopping only to find that the 50% discount only applies to full-priced items. Not only that, but you only get that 50% discount for a pair of flip-flops, a pair of shorts or jeans, and two shirts. This is the discount for the “work clothes” you have to wear. From then on, you only get 20% off, which is less than most of their in-store deals for customers.

This brings me to my third point – the dress code. Thinking ‘Hollister’, I thought, well, you just have to wear Hollister clothes. Wrong! They do have to be the Hollister brand, but they take it a step further. They have to fit the “look book”. The look book is a packet of papers in which each page is dedicated to a different season. It shows the products of that season which are the only appropriate items to wear as an employee of Hollister. You may only wear those certain pairs of shorts, those exact flip flops, and the shorts. Even more, you cannot dye your hair, wear jewelry unless it’s diamond-studded, or paint your nails. Well, I guess that’s a lie. You can paint your nails, but not your fingernails. Also, if you do paint your toenails, they can only be shades of red or pink. Your hair must look natural, cannot have product in it, but still has to look like a model’s. I don’t even try this hard to look good when I go to a party.

In closing, Hollister is the job for you if you don’t need money to pay bills or to fill your gas tank, if your entire wardrobe fits the “look book” styles, or if you like having unexpected shifts. I moved up here to get a better education, to earn better wages, and to live an improved lifestyle. Hollister was nothing more than a setback to those dreams. In retrospect, I shouldn’t have been too shy to ask what the pay rate was or to ask about any scheduling flaws. If I had known about these disappointments earlier, I could have gone out and found a better job and been making better money by now. Instead, I’m left jobless with little money to hold me over until my next job. So take it from me. Be assertive. Ask questions. And do yourselves a favor… don’t work at Hollister!